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THE CAVE CANNIBALS OF SOUTH AFRICA.

By JAMES HENRY BOWKER, Dr. BLEEK, and Dr. JOHN BEDDOE.

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AMONGST the many interesting objects of the Transgariep country are the celebrated Cannibal Caverns, the largest of which is situated amongst the mountains beyond Thaba Bosigo. A visit to this cavern will well repay the traveller for the break-neck journey that he is obliged to take before reaching it; and after he has spent an hour or two in the cavern and its vicinity, he will, I imagine, return a wiser and a sadder man; for such were the feelings that I brought away with me after paying it a visit.

We left Thaba Bosigo (the residence of the old Chief Moshesh) in the morning, and after passing that mountain, we travelled up a steep and narrow valley, and then along the Berea heights, until we reached the old deserted mission station Cana, where having obtained the necessary guides amongst the natives of this place, we started for the Cannibal Cavern, which was about two miles distant. Upon our arrival at the mountain above the cavern we left our horses in charge of a native, and descended a steep and rugged foot-path (or rather I should have said, a *hand-and-foot-path*, for the hands have quite as much to do in travelling this precipitous path as the feet), and by dint of holding on to tufts of grass, shrubs, projecting rocks, &c., &c., and by slipping, sliding, and scrambling, we at length arrived upon a grassy ledge, in the face of the cliff, where we could stand without the necessity of holding on. On turning to the right of this ledge the scene opened out in all its grandeur; and certainly, in all my life and wanderings, I have never beheld a more savage looking place. The cavern is formed by the overhanging cliff, and its entrance, a long, rugged, natural arch, extends along the whole face of the cavern, or nearly so, which is in length about one hundred and thirty yards, and its breadth about one hundred. The roof of this place, which is lofty and arched, is blackened with the smoke and soot of the fires of the savages who

formerly inhabited it, and its floor, strewn with the remains of what they had left there, consisted of heaps of human bones, piled up together or scattered about at random in the cavern, and from thence, down the sloping face of the rock, as far as the eye could reach, the clefts and small level spots were white with the bones and skulls of human beings; skulls especially were very numerous, and consisted chiefly of those of children and young persons. These remains told too true a tale of the purpose for which they had been used, for they were hacked and cut to pieces with what appeared to have been either blunt axes or sharpened stones; the marrow-bones were split into small pieces, the rounded joints alone being left unbroken. Only a very few of these bones were charred by fire, showing that the prevailing taste had been for boiled rather than roast meat.

You may guess the feelings with which I wandered about this gloomy sepulchre, and examined its various places of interest. One spot was pointed out to me, with rough irregular steps, leading up into the interior of the cavern to a gloomy-looking natural gallery, and in this place, I was informed, were stowed away the unfortunate victims not required for immediate consumption. From this place it was impossible to escape without passing through the middle of the cavern, which they could not do without being detected.

Horrible as all this must appear, there might be some excuse made for savages, driven by famine to extreme hunger, for capturing and devouring their enemies; but with these people it was totally different, for they were inhabiting a fine agricultural tract of country, which also abounded in game; but, notwithstanding all this, they were not contented with hunting and feeding upon their enemies, but preyed much upon each other also, for many of their captures were made from amongst the people of their own tribe, and even worse than this, in times of scarcity, many of their own wives and children became the victims of this horrible practice. If a wife proved lazy, or quarrelsome, she was speedily disposed of; or a crying baby would in like manner be silenced, and any member of the community showing signs of sickness, or bodily infirmity, would not be allowed to linger or to fall off in condition. Such were the horrible practices of this degraded people, and although it is now commonly reported that they have for many years entirely given up this diabolical way of living, I saw, while at the cavern, unmistakable evidence that the custom has not been altogether abandoned, for amongst the numerous bones were a few that appeared very recent; they were apparently those of a tall, bony individual, with a skull as hard as bronze; in the joints of these bones the marrow and fatty substances were still evident, showing but too plainly that not many months had elapsed since he had met his fate.

This cavern is one of the largest in the country, and from all accounts formed one of the head-quarter establishments of the cannibals ; but the whole country, from the Moluta to the Caledon, including a part of the Putesana River, was, about thirty years ago, inhabited by cannibals, who were the terror of the surrounding tribes.

Their mode of living was to send out hunting parties who would conceal themselves amongst the rocks and bushes, and lie in ambush near roads, drifts, gardens, or watering places, for the purpose of surprising and capturing women and children, or travellers, or boys in search of lost cattle, &c.

There are still a good many of the old cannibals in existence. On the day that we visited the cavern, I was introduced to one of them, who is now living not very far from his former dwelling-place. He is a man of about sixty years of age, and (not to speak from prejudice) one of the most God-lost looking ruffians that I have ever beheld in all my life. There is one little episode connected with his life that I may as well relate. In former days, when he was a young man, and residing in the cavern, he captured, during one of his hunting expeditions, three young women, and from these he selected the best looking as a partner for life—the other two went to stock the larder. This union, notwithstanding the strange circumstances attending it, proved to be a happy one, the lady soon reconciling herself to her new mode of living, and settling quietly down in the cavern, where I was shown the corner which she and her husband formerly occupied ; and her son, a fine strapping youth, brought us some milk on the day on which we visited the caverns. The old man's name is Rankutsent,\* and that of his wife Mategyeni.

Of the vegetation of the cavern and its vicinity, I have but little to say. There was nothing remarkable about it ; a few scattered ferns of the commonest kinds grew here and there in the crevices of its roof, and outside of the cavern, growing in the broken skull of a child, which was partly filled with earth and served it as a flower-pot, was a little bulb (one of *Asphodelaceæ*), which I brought away with me as a souvenir of the cavern and its sad associations.

I also visited, in company with some friends, several of the cannibal caverns near the sources of the Caledon River. Some of these are very fine large caverns, though not so extensive as the one that I have just described. These Caledon River caverns are still inhabited, though no

\* This is probably *Rakotsuane*, whom Arbousset and Dumas mention as the principal chief of the cannibal tribe, called *Makhatla*, tributaries to Moshesh. According to Arbousset's original account (*Relation*, p. 117), *Rakotsuane* had four kraals under him, whilst the translation (*Narrative*, p. 58) makes him govern twenty-five or twenty-six kraals, the most considerable of which was *Sefika*.

longer by cannibals, as the people have taken to other modes of procuring a livelihood.

At one of these caverns we met with an old savage, who told us that he had formerly been at the cooking of about thirty people, when cannibalism was still in vogue, and he seemed, like the "Last Minstrel," greatly to regret that

"Old times were changed,  
Old manners gone;"

and that

"The bigots of this iron time  
Had called his *harmless* life a crime."

for he appeared to think that the objections raised to their former mode of living were unreasonable and uncalled-for. This old savage had a "devil'd kidney," or "boiled missionary," look about him.

While we were at this place we heard rather a curious anecdote ; it is as follows :—

Many years ago, during one of the raids made by the cannibals, several individuals were captured and brought into the cavern, and amongst them was a young girl of great personal attractions. After a great deal of discussion on the part of the savages, her life was spared, and she became the wife of one of the cannibals. After some time had elapsed the father of this girl received information that she was still alive, but detained in the cavern ; upon hearing which he sought the aid of one of the missionaries residing in those regions, and together they proceeded to the cavern, where they made the necessary arrangements for the girl's return to her home, the father paying six oxen as ransom for his daughter. But she had not been very long at home before she again disappeared, and, upon inquiry being made, it was found that she had, of her own free will, returned to her friends in the cavern ; strange to say, preferring their mode of living to that of her father, who was not a cannibal.

There is another anecdote told of these people, which I will also relate, as it serves to illustrate their manners and customs, and to show how lightly they regarded human life :—

In former times, when lions were plentiful in these regions, they would occasionally (like the inhabitants of the caverns) choose the flesh of human game in preference to that of wild animals, becoming exceedingly troublesome in their nightly ravages to the inhabitants of the caverns, seizing and devouring many of them. To rid themselves of the lions, these people constructed stone-traps, and (shocking to relate) these stone-traps were baited with young children, whose sad wailings attracted the lions to the spot, when they would be taken in the snare, and the life of the child sacrificed. There is an old woman living near Thaba Bosigo who told me that she had, in the days of her

childhood, been the bait of a lion-trap ; fortunately for her the lions did not enter the trap in which she was placed, or she would not have been saved to tell the tale.

The inhabitants of these caverns, who were formerly cannibals, constitute a part of Moshesh's tribe, which has been made up of the remnants of various aboriginal nations. The old chief, I have heard, did all in his power to suppress and do away with cannibalism amongst his people, and his endeavours were at length crowned with success, for they have, almost without exception, ceased to practise this inhuman custom, and have taken to other and more civilised modes of obtaining a livelihood. They are now not only stock-breeders, as well as stock-lifters, but they are also tillers of the soil.

DR. BLEEK HAS KINDLY ADDED THE FOLLOWING.

Those whom it may interest to hear more of the history of this cannibalism, we refer particularly to *Arbousset et Daumas' Relation d'un Voyage d'exploration au Nord-est de la Colonie du Cap de Bonne-Espérance ; entrepris dans les mois de mars, avril et mai 1836* (Paris 1842), chap. VII, pp. 105-123. In the English translation by our late colonial botanist, Dr. Brown (Cape Town, 1846), this chapter is at pp. 52-61 ; but the translation does not contain the plates of the original edition, among which there are two (facing pp. 106 and 110) portraying the cannibal Betshuana. In the map which accompanies the original edition we find the seats of these cannibals laid down to the north east of Thaba Bosigo. A short account of them is also given in the Rev. Edward Solomon's *Two Lectures on the Native Tribes of the Interior* (Cape Town, 1855), pp. 62-64.

According to the latter writer, the tribes who practised cannibalism were four, of whom two were Betshuana (the *Bafukeng* or *Ba-hukeng* and *Ma-katla*), and two Kafir, viz., the *Ba-makakana* and the *Ba-matlapatlapa*. It appears as if these tribes had first become cannibals through the wars which devastated those parts of Africa nearly fifty years ago. There is no doubt, however, that when once the appetite for human flesh had been created, they did not abandon the use of this kind of food, even after the necessity had ceased ; and cannibalism became the habit of a people who (as our reporter had observed) inhabited "a fine agricultural country, which also abounded with game." It is possible, however, that cannibalism is of far older date in these regions. The native literature of the Zulus and the Betshuana abounds with reference to the cannibals who are called *A-ma-zimu* (sing. *I-zimu*) in Zulu, and *Ma-rimo* (sing. *Le-rimo*) in Setshuana. In several of the interesting Zulu nursery tales, published by Dr. Callaway, the cannibals play as prominent a part as the giants and man-eating witches in our European nursery tales. How deliciously, it is

told, how Unhlakanyana, entrapped by the cannibals, makes them eat their own mother instead of himself. Another story is remarkable, because it is met with not only among the Zulu, but is also told in essentially the same manner by the Betshuâna tribes. It is the tale of "The Girl and the Cannibals," on pp. 142-152 of Dr. Callaway's *Nursery Tales*; and another Zulu version of it appears to be *Usitungu sonbenhle*, on pp. 74-78. Arbousset recounts it under the title *Tsêlané*, at pp. 119-123 of his *Relation* (pp. 59-61 of Dr. Brown's Translation). The Setlapi version differs somewhat both from the Sesuto and the Zulu. It was written down from the dictation of a native called Mahube, by the late Rev. J. Frédoux (Motito, Dec. 13th, 1865), and is preserved in manuscript at the Grey Library.

The following is a general account of the *Amazimu*, or cannibals, as dictated in Zulu to Dr. Callaway by a native (*Nursery Tales*, pp. 155-158):—

"All I know is that it is said that the *Amazimu* deserted other men and went to live in the mountains. For at first the *Amazimu* were men. The country was desolate; there was a great famine; and they wished to eat men because of the severity of the famine. When the famine was great, and men were in want, and there was no place where they could obtain food, they began to lay hold of men and to eat them. And so they were called *Amazimu*; for the word *Amazimu*, when interpreted, means to gormandize—to be gluttonous. So they rebelled against men; they forsook them and liked to eat them; and men drove them away. They went everywhere seeking men for food, and so they were regarded as a distinct nation, for with them men became game. They no longer cultivated the soil; they no longer had cattle or houses or sheep, nor any of those things which they had had whilst they were men. They went and lived in dens. When they found a cave, it became their dwelling-place whilst they went to hunt men. If they caught a man they went to the cave; again they left it to go and hunt men. They had no fixed habitation. If they did not catch a man they were constantly on the move, going about hunting for men.

"If they saw a man going alone they went to him, they decoyed him, and made themselves out merciful people; they treated him kindly, and spoke gently with him; and appeared incapable of doing any evil. When the man was thus beguiled and entirely unsuspecting, regarding them as pleasant people only, they would then lay hold of him; if he was a powerful man he might fight with them, and perhaps drive them off; or they might overcome him and carry him away to eat him. Again they hunted; at all times their occupation was to hunt.

"When they saw many men perhaps the men recognised them, and when they saw the *Amazimu* coming to them they began to prepare their weapons; if the *Amazimu* were numerous they threw themselves into line, and the men, too, threw themselves into line, forming a row. Then they drew near to each other, the *Amazimu*, too, drawing near;

but the men drew near with great courage, (that is, it required very great courage to think of fighting them,) for they knew that the Amazimu were very powerful men and fought. Perhaps they fight, perhaps they do not fight ; but the men run away on casting one glance at them, for the Amazimu were terrible. Some who are brave may fight with them, and perhaps beat them ; they then run away and leave the men behind, for the Amazimu were very swift ; and the men can do nothing, and give over the pursuit.

“Again the Amazimu hunt and fall in with other men : when they fall in with them, perhaps they see that they are Amazimu, and run away, and the Amazimu pursue them until they overtake them ; when they overtake them they lay hold of them. Others hide themselves and they do not see them. If they have caught sight of a man who has not hid himself he must run a great distance, they pursuing him till he is tired. For if a man does not hide himself, but contends with them by running only, they pursue him till they overtake him, for they do not readily tire. Then they carry him away with them, seeking a place concealed from men in the wilderness ; when they come to such a place they boil and eat him.”

Dr. Callaway errs, however, in believing that the tales of cannibals in South Africa “are, for the most part, the traditional record of the incursions of foreign slave-hunters.” If Dr. Callaway had seen the caves of the cannibals, he would hardly have doubted that the reports of the natives and the French missionaries were as literally true as could be expected under the circumstances. The long-haired cannibals are evidently Betshuana, who generally have or wear longer hair than the Kafir tribes.

#### FURTHER PARTICULARS RESPECTING THE CANNIBALS OF SOUTH AFRICA.

By Dr. JOHN BEDDOE.

An Englishman, who visited the Cannibal Caves in December 1868, says, there is a regular system of chopping up the bodies, just as a butcher does a sheep. Every skull is cut with an axe across the bridge of the nose, cutting away the jaws, which are thrown away ; a hole is then cut in the top of the skull, and the brains taken out. The ribs are all cut through to go into the cooking-pots, the large bones divided, and the marrow taken out. Many bones have gristle still adhering ; and there are marks of the knives on the skulls where the flesh has been cut off, in strips, to eat. The bodies of the Europeans who fell in the attack on Thaba Bosigo were eaten at once, under the belief that their courage would pass into the bodies of their devourers.

A Basuto, who lately took service with a colonist near Graham's Town, stated, that the cannibals always ate white people, and blacks of other tribes : but not Hottentots or half-breeds. They ate the heart, liver, etc., took out the brains, tied them in a rag, and baked



them under ashes,—this is in good seasons; in times of greater scarcity they devour the whole body. They ate all the white people who fell into their hands during the late war in the Free State.

When questioned on the subject by the Kaffir servants of the colonist,\* the same Basuto said he had never eaten human flesh himself, but he owned to having seen others do so, and he knew all about it.

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## ON MICROCEPHALI; OR, HUMAN-APE ORGANISMS.†

By Professor CARL VOGT, Hon. F.A.S.L.

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I PURPOSE in this memoir to treat of certain cases of idiotism, happily very rare, which are the result of a congenital insufficiency of the cerebral system, and which should be distinguished from such cases of idiotism as are produced by various maladies after birth.

The intellectual faculties may be more or less profoundly altered by a number of different causes. They may be disturbed momentarily, or for a more or less considerable length of time, or even through life, by acute or chronic attacks. They may even be almost entirely abolished by morbid causes, leaving pathological alterations, differing much in their nature, but resembling each other in their effects. We now know that the primary causes of these states of brutalisation, known by the names of idiotism or cretinism, may vary; that cretinism may be combined with thousand deformations, differing much from each other, of the osseous cranium, of the integuments and of the substance of the brain; that effusions, extravasation of blood, inflammations, partial or general dropsy, may induce similar effects as regards the intellectual life of the brain, and that these morbid states may anatomically be manifested by a number of frequently opposite alterations.

I do not intend to enter into the analysis of all these cases, which are the result of morbid conditions supervening in an originally normally constituted organ. I shall only treat of cases of microcephaly, properly so called; where, by an arrest of development—which supervened during the uterine life of the foetus, and by causes as yet unknown—the brain of the embryo is struck before being definitively

\* Who was my informant.—J. B.

† We propose to publish, in a series of articles, a translation of the greater part of the important Memoir which M. Vogt has recently published on the above subject. We are glad to announce that we do so with the author's sanction and cooperation.—EDITOR.